

# O‘AHU CREEPER

(*Paroreomyza maculata*)

Only three O‘ahu Creepers were found during intensive field studies conducted during 1977-1978. In 1985, a juvenile O‘ahu Creeper was sighted. The true status of this endangered bird is difficult to determine, since, many reported sightings may have actually been the ‘Amakihi, which closely resembles the O‘ahu Creeper. This rare bird is undoubtedly on the verge of extinction.

**DISTRIBUTION:** The O‘ahu Creepers found during the 1977-1978 survey were in mixed ‘ōhi‘a-koa forest between 1,000 and 2,000 feet elevation in Moanalua Valley, North Hālawā Valley, and in a valley south of the Mānana trail. The most recent sighting was on the Poamoho trail.

**DESCRIPTION:** Adult males are olive-green above and golden yellow below. Females and juveniles are gray to grayish green above and yellowish white below and usually have white wingbars. O‘ahu Creeper and ‘Amakihi adult males lack wingbars. Creepers can be distinguished from the ‘Amakihi by: their nearly straight (rather than decurved) bill; the dark stripe beginning with the lores extending past the eye of the Creeper; but not in the ‘Amakihi; and the lighter “forehead” and pale lower mandible of the Creeper.

**VOICE:** The short, loud call note has been described as “chip,” “chick,” and “chirk.” The song of the O‘ahu Creeper has never been described.

**NESTING:** A nest composed primarily of mosses and rootlets, containing two whitish eggs with reddish-brown spotting, was collected in January 1901.

**DIET:** O‘ahu Creepers move methodically up and down the trunk or large branches of trees as they probe for insects beneath the bark. Their exact diet is unknown, although records from the early twentieth century indicate that they eat beetle larvae.

**CONSERVATION NOTE:** There are five species of creepers; the Kaua‘i and Hawai‘i species are relatively common and belong to the same genus. The Maui, Moloka‘i and O‘ahu species belong to another genus. And while the Maui species is relatively common, the O‘ahu and Moloka‘i Creepers are extremely rare.

During the 1890s, creepers were reported to be abundant on all islands except O‘ahu, they were found to be on both the Ko‘olau and Wai‘anae ranges and were first noted to have declined from the mountains near Honolulu. Naturalists studying birds at the turn of the century noted that the O‘ahu Creeper could not be found from Wai‘alae to Kalihi. Habitat destruction undoubtedly was a major factor in their decline. The development that accompanied human settlement and the impacts of introduced plants, animals, and avian diseases may have all contributed to the Oahu Creeper’s critical status. Whether these small endangered birds can maintain their precarious existence in O‘ahu’s forests is unknown.



Easily confused with the ‘Amakihi, the O‘ahu Creeper is much rarer.  
—Painting by Sheryl Ives Boynton